

RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
DATED MAY 16, 2005

Appln. No. 10/734,040

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August 3, 2005

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated May 16, 2005. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Summary of Claim Rejections

Claims 1-15 are pending in the application and all are rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,643,464 to Weinhold.

Summary of the Invention

Applicant's claims are directed to a coupling assembly for flexibly joining pipes to one another end to end and permitting axial, angular and torsional deflections between them. The coupling assembly comprises a first ring attachable to one of the pipe ends. The first ring has an outer diameter greater than the pipe and an outwardly facing circumferential groove. A first sealing member is positionable within the groove of the first ring. The first sealing member extends circumferentially around the first ring. A second ring is attachable to another of the pipe ends to be joined. The second ring has an outer diameter greater than the pipe and an outwardly facing circumferential groove. A second sealing member is positionable within the groove of the second ring and extends circumferentially around the second ring. A band is positionable in overlying relation with and surrounding the first and second rings. The band has an inwardly facing surface sealingly engageable with the first and second sealing members. A housing is positionable in overlying relation with and surrounding the rings and the band. The housing is radially spaced apart from the band allowing the band to float on the sealing members. The housing has a pair of circumferential rims positioned in longitudinally spaced apart relation to one another. Each rim is sized and toleranced to maintain the aforementioned spaced relation between the housing and the band. The housing also has a pair of first

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shoulders positioned in spaced apart relation and facing one another. Each shoulder is engageable with one of the rings for limiting axial and angular deflection of one pipe relative to the other. The housing also has a pair of second shoulders positioned in spaced apart relation. Each one of the second shoulders is engageable with the band for maintaining the band substantially concentric within the housing.

Summary of the Amendments to the Specification

Applicant has added to the description an explanation of the pair of second shoulders 33 as shown in Figures 4-6. The shoulders were part of the original filing. No new matter has been added.

Summary of the Claim Amendments

Applicant has amended independent Claims 1 and 10 to recited that the housing has a pair of second shoulders in spaced relation that are engageable with the band to help maintain it substantially concentric within the housing. Support for these amendments may be found in Figures 4-6 as originally filed, which illustrate first shoulders 30 engageable with the rings 32 and 34 and second shoulders, labeled 33 in the enclosed amended drawings, engageable with band 48.

Summary of the Amendments to the Drawings

Applicant provided herewith Figures 4-6 amended in red ink for the Examiner's consideration and approval, the applicant adding reference character 33 identifying a pair of second shoulders on housing portions 14 and 16 that are engageable with band 48 as recited in the amended claims. The shoulders so indicated were present in the figures as originally filed. No new matter has been added.

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Arguments Traversing Rejections as to Anticipation

The structure of housing portions 14 and 16 as recited in amended Claims 1 and 10 differs significantly from the housing 24 shown in Figure 2 of U.S. Patent No. 4,643,464 to Weinhold. Weinhold discloses a straight sided housing that has no structure in the form of multiple shoulders as recited in applicant's claims. Applicant asserts that Weinhold does not anticipate either independent Claims 1 and 10 as amended because of the shoulders 30 and 33 positioned within the housing portions 14 and 16, which are not disclosed in Weinhold or other prior art known to the applicant.

The presence of multiple shoulders as shown in Figures 4-6 of the application limits the axial and angular displacement of the pipes being joined and also allows a relatively narrow band to be used while still ensuring a fluid tight seal at the joint.

Weinhold cannot properly support a rejection of Claims 1 and 10 on the basis of anticipation because it fails to teach every claim element, specifically, Weinhold does not disclose a housing having multiple shoulders as recited in applicant's claims. Claims 2-9 and 11-14 depend, respectively, on Claims 1 and 10 and should be allowable for the same reasons that Claims 1 and 10 are allowable.

Applicant has canceled Claim 15 drawn to a method of flexibly attaching pipes to one another.

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Summary

Applicant contends that the amendments to Claims 1 and 10 overcome the rejection of these claims as anticipated by Weinhold and place the application in condition for allowance. Applicant requests, therefore, that the application be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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JAC/dml
Enclosures

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Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Figures 4, 4A, 5 and 6. In Figures 4, 4A, 5 and 6, previously omitted reference character 33 has been added. In Figure 6, previously omitted reference character 30 has been added.

Attachment: Annotated Sheets Showing Changes.